



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



NICE EXAMPLES OF CONVENTIONALIZED FLORAL AND INSECT FORMS

—Courtesy Burley & Company

Exhibition of Decorated Porcelain

By JAMES WILLIAM PATTISON

THE fourth annual exhibition of ceramics at the establishment of Burley & Co., Chicago, opened on September second, a date which former exhibitions have marked in red letters upon the calendar of the American china painter, to whom this gathering of artists and their works has grown to be the greatest event of the year.

The time is well chosen, for it is the season when vacations are ended and artist and teacher, rested in mind and body approach their work again with fresh enthusiasm and yet it is in advance of the actual opening of the studios for the busy fall and winter days. The place too, is particularly appropriate, as there is no public gallery devoted especially to ceramics, whereas here this art is the supreme interest in life instead of an accessory one.

How much these exhibitions mean to the ceramist may be gathered from the yearly increase in extent and attendance, for the one just closed represented the majority of the distinguished of the craft among exhibitors and visitors. Thus the original aim of these yearly presentations of all that is best in artistic ceramics has been achieved, the purpose of increasing the interest and the art of the decorators in perfecting and enriching the American School.

Although "china painting" is the term usually applied to overglaze decoration on ceramics, and, in America, little attention is paid to any other, it were better perhaps, for the sake of clearness, to talk of "overglaze" and "under-glaze." With the overglaze the decoration is applied to the surface of the porcelain after it is entirely

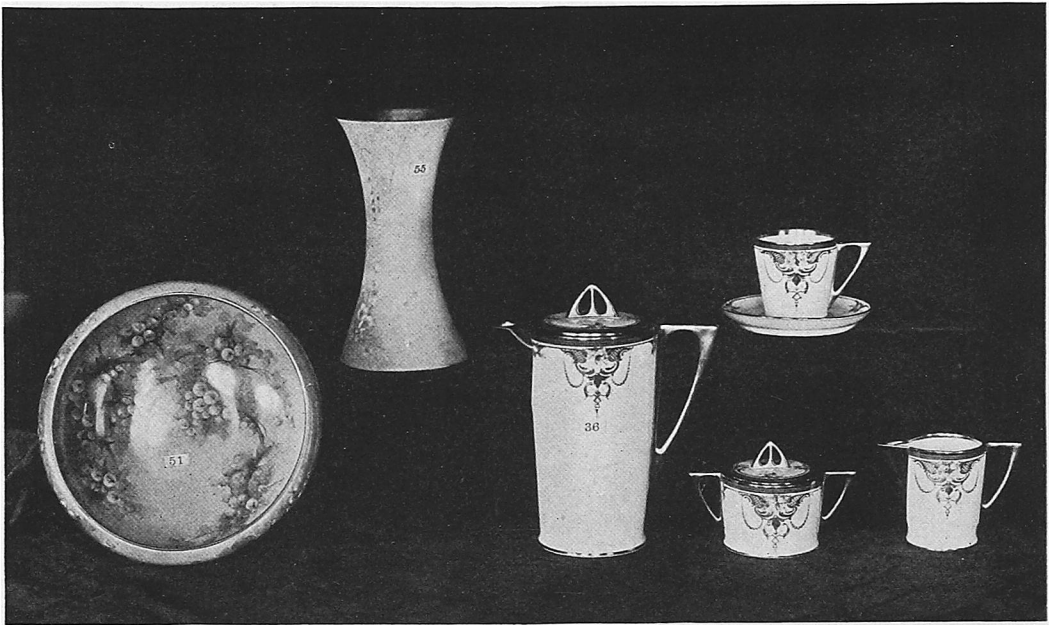


PLATE AND VASE SHOWING REALISTIC TREATMENT; CHOCOLATE SERVICE,
CONVENTIONAL

—Courtesy Burley & Company

finished. The article first comes from the kiln in what is called the "biscuit" state, and, afterward, it is covered with a beautiful glaze, which being fired upon it leaves it quite complete. On this glaze the mineral paints used by the decorators are applied to give the necessary touch of truth and beauty. These colors contain in themselves a glazing material which sticks fast to the smooth surface when the piece is again fired to complete the decoration, by amalgamating the painting with the glaze.

Porcelain can be decorated before glazing, the embellished biscuit pieces being baked in the hot kiln and sometimes gone over again in order to complete and enrich the decoration. When the decoration thus goes directly onto the piece in the biscuit state to be glazed subsequently, it is technically termed "under-glaze" work. If then it be put through still another process as first explained in our paragraph on "over-glaze," the piece has been painted twice and we have a combination of the two

forms. However, we rarely find under—and over—glaze combined on one piece in this country excepting on certain costly pieces brought from Europe, and on Chinese porcelain. In fact, the Chinese are the champion potters of the world, surpassing even the clever Japanese. We see, however, the best of Chinese porcelain only in museums and special private collections. The wealthy owners of these wonderful pieces do not place them on their dinner tables for the use of their guests which would be slightly extravagant. They consider themselves fortunate if the occasional and necessary dustings and cleaning bring no fractures of these precious surfaces. In the history of the life of Sir Horace Walpole, the English statesman, it is related, that to his most important guests he served tea in cups that once graced the table of Charles I; and that at the close of the meal a silver dishpan was placed before him so that with his own sensitive hands he could wash these cups tenderly, so we may un-

derstand how few would care to dress a table with antiques or other precious porcelain.

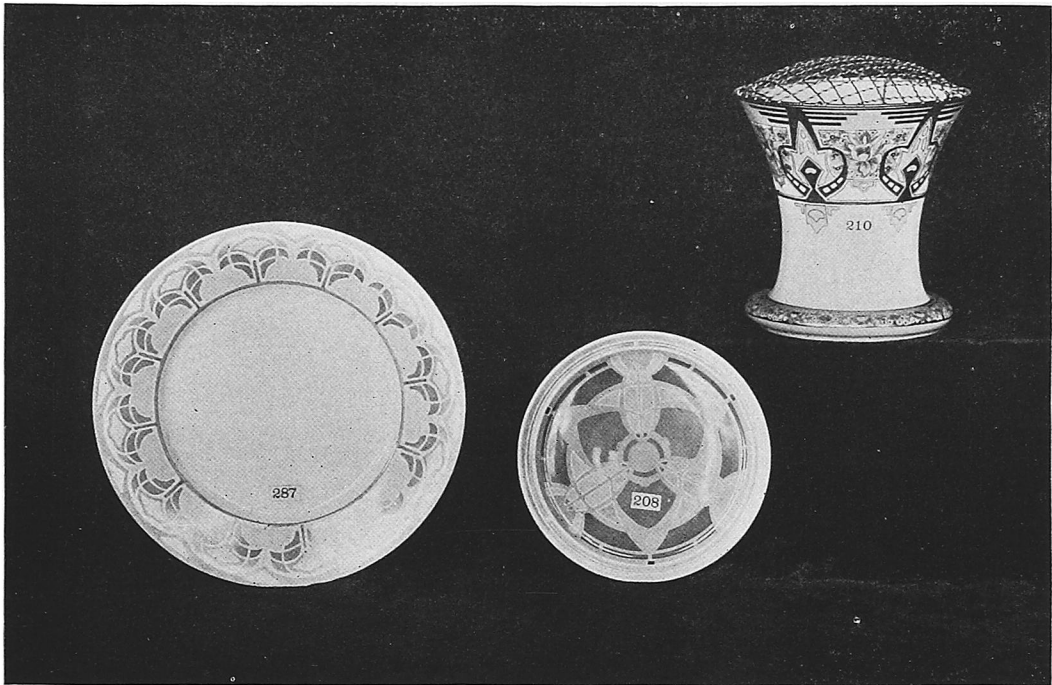
Our examination now brings us to the clever manner in which these modern china painters have managed "conventional decoration" and "realistic design." Of course the realistic designs are more or less arranged so as to make them suitable for production of flat surface. Even when placed on a globular surface, the effect is plain and smooth and there is no attempt at a raised surface. However, they look real and are therefore termed "realistic." It is not strange that many porcelain painters love to represent on a flat plate real violets, roses, or fruits, because they love realism. To paint a dainty bunch of flowers as they might look if tossed into the hollow of the dish is a most pleasant occupation. It has but recently been appreciated that a dish

is an obstinate shape, and that the shape is of importance to it. True conventionalization strives to make the decoration follow the shape of the plate, and to accomplish this the decoration must be somewhat geometric. This conventional decoration is not realistic but simply a design paying special attention to the shape of the object. By examining the illustrations which accompany this writing, the difference between these two styles of adornment may be determined. In fact, the conventional pattern is simply a flat design following the shapes and colors of Nature but not striving to make the objects look real, and it must follow the changing surfaces of the porcelain. A plate, for example, is a circular object having a raised rim and any pattern which conforms to the various shapes of the plate must be to a certain degree a geometric pattern. In the



GROUP SHOWING CONVENTIONAL STYLE OF DECORATING

—Courtesy Burley & Company



PLATES AND FLOWER VASE DECORATED WITH GEOMETRIC DESIGN

—Courtesy Burley & Company

same way the cup or bowl is a rounded hollow and the decoration it receives should be architectural in character. Of course this requires wit and a sense of the shape of the object. Among the porcelain decorated with conventional patterns we find ourselves enriching the various planes and parts, much as we would a building. We can cover the pillars with one tint and the capital of the pillars with another, can divide the rim into various sections, all depending upon the sense of flat tone. It is called "conventional decoration" simply because the objects of nature are all modified and managed so as to suit the architectural features. It is not a question of making real flowers, but of using the shape and color of fruit and flowers simply as so many spots.

There are here groups of conventionally decorated porcelains which, by request of Miss H. Peterson, are withheld from competition. Among them is a large and beau-

tiful lamp with an umbrella-shaped Oriental shade, to the edge of which are suspended little decorated balls. A jar of considerable size was not created especially to hold oil but it is, properly speaking, the lamp in question. The upper half of this rotund jar is beautifully gilded, the lower half is handsomely decorated, the principal form having been borrowed from the Oriental shade. While the Oriental design is somewhat confused, in the use of it by the China painter there is perfect orderliness and suitability. All over the golden top are well arranged little spots and each queer shape of these spots may be found somewhere in the complicated shade. I scarcely can recollect anything here that is more artistic than this application.

Throughout this exhibition of conventional decorations, there are frequently managed borders of conventional form sustained in their character by the white porcelain around them and forming a series

of spots very much like the numerals on the face of a clock. Perhaps there is more of this than is necessary, but it is exceedingly pleasant treatment. In the matter of plates it is very common to leave the center untouched, or they may be centered by an ornamental disc. Dishes for holding nuts or small fruit may be decorated in this way most suitably for their use.

There are several square dishes, possibly for salads, though that makes no difference, the tendency is to have these square dishes with a flaring rim, and each corner is built up to sustain an ornamental pattern. Probably the side rims will each hold an elaborately decorated design leading up to the flaring corners. Certainly several objects that have received this treatment are very satisfactory. There is something exceedingly rhythmic about these

varied surfaces as our eyes follow them around the edges of a square plate. There is a little tendency here to use very tender colors to form these patterns, the tones going best with white porcelain, as gold and pale greens, very refined and intermingled with some red and grey. Possibly this has been done too many times but these colors are exceedingly agreeable, harmonious and suited to the objects upon which they are laid. Sometimes small amounts of red and bands of grey do the duty of decoration and keep company with the untouched white of the porcelain, with an extraordinary cleverness. In fact, one can be astonished at the variety of the forms all drawn from nature and conventionalized as, for instance, in a sort of frieze, as it were, made up of pomegranates which give a delicate reddish tone in the midst of the green



PLATE AND CHOCOLATE POT DECORATED WITH FRUIT AND FLOWERS; CHOCOLATE SERVICE IN CONVENTIONAL DESIGN

—Courtesy Burley & Company



PIECES SHOWING NATURALISTIC TREATMENT

—Courtesy Burley & Company

leaves, and in an eight-sided plate, each of its corners decorated with a suitable radiating form.

A long, slender platter, with a gold handle at either end, probably intended for the serving of sandwiches is by Mrs. LeRoy T. Stewart, who is a veteran and leader among the ceramists, but has not allowed her work to enter the competition. The decoration of this platter is delightfully simple and in a few choice colors. In this same group appears a unique vase, sturdy and the embodiment of dignified simplicity. The object is cylindrical in shape and about as wide as it is high. The waist is near the foot and very stout. A series of long lines of rich gold fall from the frieze at the top and spread themselves over the foot. The body of the vase is a very rich grey green and these long lines suggest the forms of the devil's darning needle, its

white outspread wings left white with the exception of delicate gold lines. It is one of the most effective things in the entire exhibition.

The exact duplicate in shape of this porcelain appears in another group, but so differently treated that one has to look twice before becoming aware of its shape, the more so as a gold wire-net curves over its open mouth. As the vase is so wide for its height, flowers would find difficulty in standing up unsupported, hence the wire netting. The upper half of this vase is occupied by conventional pattern, the lower half is plain white excepting that the foot is handsomely decorated. This vase is more decorative than the other but not quite so impressive.

Let us turn from these geometrical designs, which follow the shape of the surface upon which they are painted, to the

realistic renderings which do not pay attention to anything but the naturalness of the fruits and flowers placed regardless of the architectural shape of the article, merely thrown on the surface so as to make pretty groups, as one would hand up a bunch of grapes or a bouquet of roses in the side or center of the plate, to be admired because the grapes look juicy and the flowers natural and tender. In two cases these are held in shape by conventional design to make them a little more in keeping. There is one naturalistic vase, however, flaring at the top and bottom, perfectly plain, excepting for strands of delicate flowers up and down the sides, which is simplicity in itself and much more agreeable than the bunches of fruits tossed in the hollow of the dish. Close by one of these realistic groups, is a chocolate pot with cups in reserved conventionalism; most of the surfaces being left white.

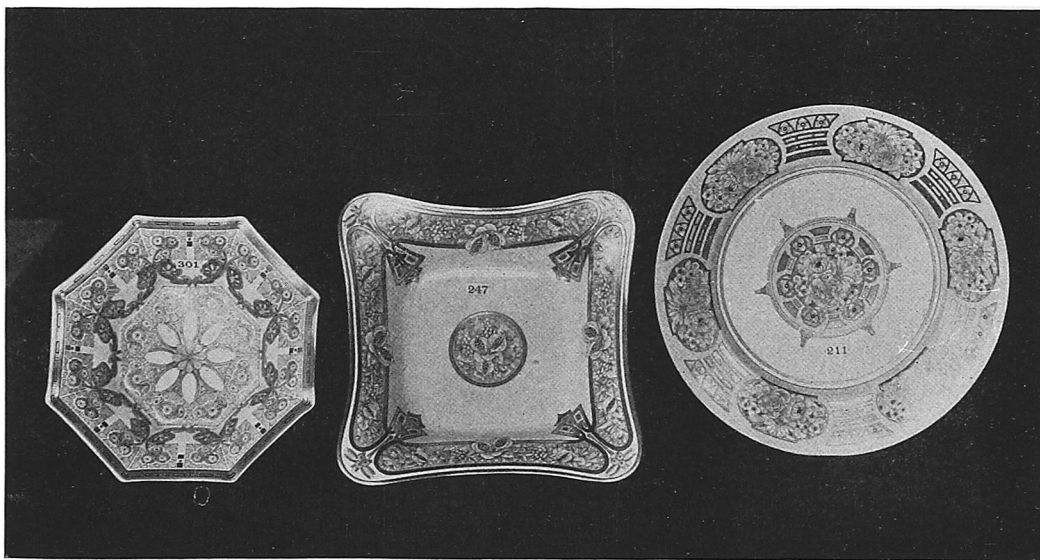
One large plate has bunches of leaves festooned above with lilacs in blossom, the violet color contrasted with the green of the shrub. These lilacs are very pale and tender, so much so as to awaken suspicion that the flowers suffered in the firing. Close

by this large plate with the lilacs is a naturalistic grey moonlight; a lakelet in the midst of which is an island covered with trees. The moon is rising behind these trees and everything swims in delicate grey, while swans float on the waters. This altogether grey and tonal effect is decidedly poetic.

Were it an oil painting there might be a question of its force in execution, but we accept many things in decorated china which would not be allowed in oil painting. A tall, straight-sided vase represents a thread of waterfall, in two sections, tumbling down the side of the cliff. Being probably an actual scene we doubt not that someone will cherish it for its actuality, and it certainly is interesting and unusual. With equal certainty, to render a thing of this kind well, demands the thorough training of a good landscape painter.

Mrs. Abby Pope Walker makes a beautiful display of work by her class at the Art Institute, all the pieces showing the good training to which she has subjected her pupils.

We have here so far attempted to call attention only to the various styles of dec-



THREE PRIZE PIECES SHOWING CONVENTIONAL DECORATION

—Courtesy Burley & Company

orating white porcelain. These white goods themselves, made to be decorated, come from Bavaria and Germany, where there are extensive potteries, and Burley & Company keep large stocks of this plain white ware for the benefits of American china painters. The trend of the art at all times is carefully studied and the factories of Europe are required to meet the needs of its advancing standards. New and more graceful shapes in the ware itself are constantly sought that the decorator may not be held in tedious restraint by an unvaried monotony of form.

Not only may the decorator devise new designs for embellishing the offerings of the

potteries, but even patterns of such originality as to demand new forms designed especially to receive such treatment. The director of the white china department of Burley's fashions in wood or plaster shapes which shall best display any novel and noble conceptions in all their beauty so that the art may possess the flexibility necessary for growth. These newly decorated porcelains sent here for exhibition come from every section of the United States and the house of Burley have given a series of prizes which were awarded by a number of art critics who generously tendered their time and skill to make the necessary selections.

